



Finally...!

Anglophone School Board Professionals reach an “Agreement in Principle” to present to its members for ratification

On June 13, 2010 the FPPE and CPNCA concluded an “Agreement in Principle” for the 650 professionals working in Anglophone school boards across the province of Quebec. Given that we have not had a negotiated agreement since 1992, both parties are heralding this outcome as a major accomplishment. This means that certain dispositions that have been maintained as a result of two previous rounds of negotiations that ended with a status quo settlement (2000) and by government decree (2005), will now be up-dated to include a number of improvements to the working conditions for FPPE Anglophone members. Although the process for arriving at an agreement was long and arduous, the negotiating team is convinced that it was well worth the effort. What have we obtained :

1 **Increased Professional resources for frontline services in all sectors (Youth, Adult and Vocational Education)**

The Ministry has committed to adding a specific envelope (23.7 million) that will translate into 380 (equivalent to full-time) regular professional positions being added to the ranks of Quebec school boards professional personnel. In the form of a specific allocation, school boards will be held accountable for the use of funds which must be used to either open new regular positions, increase the hours of those already in place or to maintain services in the event of budgetary cutbacks due to a significant decrease in student enrolments.

An annex describing the program will be included in the collective agreement and specific to the hiring of professionals with a statute of « regular » to provide frontline services. While the school board has the discretion to allocate the resources according to their own evaluation of the needs of the system, they are required to present their plan to the Labor Relations Committee (LRC) for consultation by May 01st of each school year and must divulge how the allocation has been used in the preceding school year and how it will be spent in the upcoming year. The annexe will also include a statement of good faith which attests to the commitment of all parties to ensure that these funds will be used to attain a « real » and measurable increase in frontline services for our Youth and Adult learners.

Finally, a provincial parity committee will be established to oversee the implementation of this measure, receive reports of any irregularities and make recommendations to both parties to resolve any problems brought to its attention.

As this was one of our most important demands in this round of negotiations, we are confident that although the resources promised are far less than our initial demand, they will make a difference in our ability to increase the level of services available, contribute to student success and meet our objective of decreasing job precarity by providing new opportunities for professionals to obtain regular positions.

2 **Access to regular positions through improved hiring procedures**

As a result of this agreement, all regular positions of 21 hours / week or more will now be posted. In addition, we were able to include replacement professionals in the sequence for hiring which will give them priority to be considered, as in the case of supernumerary professionals, once they have completed 18 months of service over a 36 month period. This gain has been the subject of each negotiating period for the last 21 years and was the final point to be settled before declaring that an agreement had been reached.

3 Professional Improvement

Funds for professional improvement the yearly allocation will be increased from \$145 to \$240 per regular professional in service at the board. School boards in more remote regions of the province will see their supplementary allocation of \$3000 currently provided, increase proportionately to \$4,965. This should allow greater access to professional development activities and facilitate the participation of a larger number of professionals.

4 Special Leaves

Several clauses were revised to improve access to special leaves for the following reasons:

- ▶▶ Redeemable sick days for supernumerary and replacement professionals with contracts of 6 months or more. July 01 of each year, the board will credit all professionals with a bank of 7 days (pro-rated to the number of hours /week) that may be reimbursed at the end of the school year if they have not been used.
- ▶▶ Leave in the event of the death of one's father, mother, brother or sister has been increased from 3 to 5 days 97-3.02b); and, civil union has been added to the leave of 3 days for marriage.
- ▶▶ Leave for family and parental responsibilities: our initial demand was asking for an additional bank of 10 days to be added to special leaves as a means of providing a better conciliation between work and family. Although this demand was refused, the CPNCA did accept to create a new clause which will allow professionals to be absent for a maximum of 10 days per school year when their presence is required for reasons related to the health, safety and security of a their child, spouse, parent, sibling or grand-parent. The first six (6) days may be deducted from the redeemable sick days bank and the remaining four (\$4) may be taken without pay. By integrating the norms found in the Quebec Labor Standards Act, the definition of the motives for this type of leave have been enlarged and extended beyond those which apply only tending to the needs of a child in your care. It is certainly a step in the right direction and recognizes the full range of family responsibilities one may be subject to.

5 Inclusion of professionals on committees for special needs students

Participation of professionals on school and board parity committees, which look at the organization of services for special needs students (EHDAA), was a major priority in this round of negotiations. As you may recall, provisions in the teacher's (QPAT) collective agreement of 2005, created local and board level committees to oversee the organization of services and to monitor how allocations

received for the hiring or maintaining of support and professional services were being used. Participation of professionals on these committees varies from one board to another and depends largely on the goodwill of the employer to include us. With provisions in our new agreement, and the results of building relationships over the past 4 years with QPAT, we will now be able to choose our representation on both committees, when invited to participate by the teacher's group. In addition, a provincial committee with a mandate to discuss and make recommendations on issues related to the organization of services for this specific clientele has been created and will bring together representatives from the employer, teacher, professional and support staff groups.

6 Leave for union activities

With the amalgamation of school boards in 1998, union groups were faced with increased membership, large geographic territories and new demands for representation. To meet these new challenges, union delegates will now see the release days allowed for union activities increased from 15 to 25 per school year.

When negotiations began with the deposit of our initial demands in October 2009, three main objectives were defined as the framework for our talks: reduce job precarity, increase resources and create measures that would facilitate a better harmonization between work and family responsibilities. While we were unable to receive a favorable response to all of our demands, we are confident that the gains obtained are significant and will contribute to an overall improvement in the working conditions of the majority of the professionals the FPPE represents.

As in all negotiations, certain compromises must be made. In exchange for the syndical gains previously mentioned, the following demands by the employer's group were agreed to:

- ▶▶ The probationary period for part-time professionals was increased from six (6) to nine (9) months; however, provisions were included to ensure that all regular professionals are subject to only one probationary period in either a part-time or full time regular position. In addition, the part-time professional who obtains a full-time position before completing their initial probation may have up to 50% (3 months) of their time accumulated credited towards the six month period required for full-time regular professionals.
- ▶▶ Professionals who are members of professional orders must maintain their membership and provide written proof of the renewal of their participation to the board on an annual basis; failure to do so may constitute a breach of contract and could result in a dismissal from the board. This measure applies to those professionals who are members of a professional order at the time of signature of the collective agreement and to future pro-

professionals when membership is required by their job classification (i.e. psychologist, speech and language therapist, guidance counselor etc.).

- ▶▶ In exchange for the redeemable sick days for supernumerary and replacement professionals, we agreed to increase the 22 day period to qualify for a new period of disability to 35 days.
- ▶▶ Supernumerary projects which were limited to 24 months before they must be attributed a regular status, may now be extended for an additional 12 month period in an effort to respond to the employers demand to increased the time allowed for new innovations or temporary needs, as defined by the school board.
- ▶▶ In the future, a limited number of collective agreements will go to print and professionals will be directed to a protected site for on-line access. Both parties agreed to this measure to be more environmentally conscious and to reduce costs.
- ▶▶ Most importantly, to avoid conceding to the employers insistence the for provisions that could lead to the annualization of professional positions and changes to the 50k limit for assignments, we agreed to participate in a provincial parity committee that will look at the unique challenges facing Anglophone school boards. In light of the large territory they must cover and the difficulty in allocating professional resources where they are most needed, this committee may be called upon to look at issues related to the work schedule, overtime and mobility of professionals within the Anglophone educational community and to make recommendations to both parties.

In conclusion

It is worth mentioning that although a settlement with the CPNCA was slow in coming, the discussions at the negotiating table with our vis-à-vis Mr. Roger Lacasse, Ms. Lucie Laferriere and Mr. Francois Gregoire were stimulating, productive and carried out in an atmosphere of mutual respect. We will continue to work together over the next couple of months to formulate and correct the wording of the final text and ensure that all incidence on others aspects of the agreement are harmonized with the new provisions.

Meanwhile negotiations continue at the intersectorial table regarding salaries, pension plans, the protocol for future negotiations and other issues that will eventually be complete our collective agreement. While most union groups in the field of education have reached “agreements in principle”, public sector employees in Health and Social Services are still in mediation and have yet to obtain a satisfactory response to their demands. As we are part of common front created to support and defend all public sector services, the final evaluation of this round of negotiations remain to be seen. However, we can celebrate the outcome of our specific talks and look forward to a promising future.

Your FPPE Negotiating Team

June 21, 2010

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